Government of Manitoba

Response to the Report and Recommendations of the Federal Task Force on the National Museums Corporation

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Museums Task Force was established in January 1986, to assess the present and potential effectiveness of the National Museums Act of 1968 and the National Museums Policy of 1972, and to report Findings and Recommendations to the Minister of Communications. In the course of its review, the Task Force consulted with federal, provincial and territorial governments, with the museum community, and with interested people across Canada.

The Government of Manitoba welcomes the efforts of the Task Force and is pleased to have contributed to such a comprehensive review of the role and operations of the National Museums of Canada Corporation. In general, Manitoba feels that the Corporation has had a positive influence on museum development in Canada, both directly and indirectly through the provision of financial assistance, services and consultation. However, as the report suggests, a restructured and revitalized federal museum mandate can better address the present and future needs of the museum community and of the Canadian public.

It is the intention of this presentation to offer Manitoba's comments and concerns with regard to the following areas:

(1) the federal role vis-a-vis Canadian museums;
(2) the federal share in museum support and development;
(3) development of the museum profession;
(4) federal/provincial relationships.

Responses to specific recommendations of the Task Force Report are contained in Appendix A.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Prior to 1967, there were 15 museums in Manitoba.

> "The growth of museums was gradual until ... communities throughout the country geared up to celebrate Confederation. As the nation matured and proceeded into its second century, Canadians began to reflect on their heritage with a sense of curiosity, eagerness and pride. This resulted in a proliferation of museums across the country. By 1970, 34 museums were listed in the Manitoba Vacation Guide. In the 1983 edition of "Museums in Manitoba", 122 museums [were] listed as operating."[1]

The Province provides major operating assistance to five museums:

Manitoba Agricultural Museum
Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature
Western Canada Aviation Museum
Winnipeg Art Gallery
Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre

"Manitoba's museum community includes theme museums (with special collections representing areas such as natural history, transportation, military, Franco-Manitoban and other ethnocultural groups) and community-based museums with historical collections relating to the surrounding area."

2.1 Manitoba's Role in Museum Development

In response to the growth in the number of museums in the province and in recognition of their importance to community development as a whole, Manitoba enacted the Museums and Miscellaneous Grants Act in 1970. Regulations to the Act provided for operating grants to museums based on eligibility criteria and standards. In 1974, the Province commissioned a

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[1] "Museums in Manitoba: Results of the 1983 Survey" by the Advisory and Extension Services, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

study to record existing museum resources and recommend proposals for their rational development. 1985 saw two important developments: the program of operating grants was reviewed and re-defined to provide for two levels of support based on administrative and policy development criteria, and a study to investigate the feasibility of a network of regional museums was completed.

In the 1985 calendar year, operating grants to museums in Manitoba amounted to $4.7 million (including operating grants of $3.0 million to the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature and $1.3 million to the Winnipeg Art Gallery). In addition, during that same period, the museum community received roughly $1.6 million through the Manitoba Jobs Fund (a program to support projects which have potential for long-term growth) and $99,200 in grants from the newly-formed Manitoba Heritage Federation, a lotteries umbrella organization. Total support for museums at the provincial level amounted to $5.4 million.

Federal assistance to Manitoba's museums through the Museum Assistance Programme of National Museums Canada during this same period amounted to $780,200, primarily in core-funding support to the two Associate museums, the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature ($273,000) and the Winnipeg Art Gallery ($193,000).

2.2 Federal/Provincial Initiatives

Two federal/provincial agreements which have had a recent and significant impact on museum development are the Agreement for Recreation and Conservation (ARC) and the Canada-Manitoba Subsidiary Agreement on Tourism Development (Destination Manitoba).

The Canada-Manitoba ARC Agreement was among Canada's first. It provided for development of 17 projects along the Red River Corridor from St. Norbert to Lake Winnipeg. In the course of implementing this agreement, several projects were carried out exclusively by the Federal government (e.g., St. Andrew's Church Rectory, Riel House) while others were carried out by the Government of Manitoba (e.g., St. Norbert Heritage Park, Kennedy House). The projects cover both human and natural heritage sites and together will provide, when completed, an extremely valuable historic and tourism resource for south-central Manitoba.

Destination Manitoba provided funds for the planning of major tourism strategies and the development of public and private amenities required to enhance Manitoba's tourism potential. The program authorized capital grants to nine museums totalling $1.4 million.

In 1984, the Government of Manitoba established a new policy and program for the conservation of heritage materials, namely the Manitoba Heritage Conservation Service. It utilizes the professional conservation expertise of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Art Gallery in providing consultation and remedial conservation services to local heritage organizations. The Conservation Assistance Programme of the Museums Assistance Programme provides salary assistance through a "sunset" agreement.

3.0 THE FEDERAL ROLE VIS-A-VIS CANADIAN MUSEUMS

There is a need for a clear, concise federal mission statement which provides for an ongoing federal commitment to Canadian museums. The federal government has a dual role in its relationship with museums: direct involvement as a programme agency and indirect involvement as an enabler in providing the museum community with financial assistance to develop its own programmes.

3.1 As a Programme Agency

As an agency, the federal government operates the four National Museums (each with a mandate to serve the country), operates programmes such as the Mobile Exhibits Programme and provides services to the museum community through federal agencies such as the Canadian Conservation Institute, the Canadian Heritage Inventory Network, and the International Programme.

The federal government has a responsibility to the Canadian public to operate well-managed federal museological institutions as well as a responsibility to the Canadian museum community to provide nation-wide services exclusive of financial assistance programmes. These services must be developed and maintained in consultation with provincial governments and the museum community.

The federal government bears responsibility for determining the appropriate legislation and governing structure of its museums. Manitoba supports the establishment of responsible Boards of Directors, consisting of knowledgeable people representative of both sexes, multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual, with regional as well as national perspectives, and with a clear understanding of their roles as well as the expectations of the Canadian museum community.

The federal museums must be adequately funded to permit them to fulfill their mandate and to deliver the programmes and services demanded by their visitors and by Canadian museums. The discussion of funding for the federal museums should include consideration of the recommendations of the Bovey and Neilsen reports. Manitoba would support the federal museums seeking alternate revenue sources provided that this activity did not disrupt the Canadian museum community's fundraising ecology.

Manitoba believes there is a continuing need for a federal role in conservation treatment, research, training, information and advisory services as well as a role in a national computerized collections inventory system. In the case of the Mobile Exhibits and International Programmes, Manitoba supports the elimination of these programmes in order to provide financial assistance to Canadian museums to allow them to develop their own capabilities in these areas. Current levels of services available through the Department of Communications and Museum Assistance Programmes must be maintained.

Manitoba recommends that the federal government investigate, in consultation with the provinces and the museum community, the feasibility of federally-established institutes for museum training and regional offices of the National Museums Corporation or similar responsibility centre to provide local sources of advice and expertise.

3.2 As an Enabler

The federal government has a responsibility to provide adequate financial assistance in support of its commitment to Canadian museums. This requires a reversal of the present trend of erosion of support to the museum community and re-affirmation of a federal commitment to federally-established institutions (the National Exhibition Centres), to major heritage institutions with which the federal government has established a special relationship - the Associates - and to the Canadian museum community as a whole.

Manitoba supports the view that there is a need to re-develop and re-sanction grant criteria. In principle, the federal government may decide where it is most appropriate to administer its programmes; however, Manitoba affirms the importance of the arm's-length principle for the delivery of federal financial assistance programmes to museums, and recommends that the federal government incorporate an element of community assessment as well as

peer assessment into its granting process. The legitimacy of an ethnic and/or multicultural component in Canadian museums must be acknowledged in federal assistance programmes.

Federal support of national and provincial association training strategies is crucial to the development of the museum profession.

4.0 THE FEDERAL SHARE IN MUSEUM SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

In July of this year, the Museum Assistance Programmes of the National Museums of Canada announced a 5% reduction in its grants budget. The Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation expressed her concern at this reduction and pointed out that funding levels provided under the Museum Assistance Programmes have never achieved the targets set for them in 1972. She stressed that further reductions would only serve to reduce the ability of museums to fulfill their mandates.

Citing figures which showed an erosion of federal support to museums, the Minister of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation noted that between 1979 and 1985 grants to Manitoba museums by National Museums Canada increased by less than the rate of inflation for core-funding of Associate Museums and National Exhibition Centres and decreased by an average of 50% for the other programmes (Upgrading and Equipment Assistance, Registration Assistance, Exhibitions Assistance, Special Activities Assistance and Training Assistance). During that same period, provincial support in Manitoba for museums increased by 250% from $1.44 million in 1978-79 to $3.60 million in 1984-85. The provincial contribution to museums in 1985/86 was approximately $5.4 million.

The federal government must accept responsibility for an increased share in supporting and developing Canadian museums. The federal government has a primary responsibility for adequately supporting its four National Museums (each of which has a mandate to serve the country) and is also responsible for adequately assisting museums throughout Canada. This responsibility is independent of any decision related to specific potential sources of federal funds.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSEUM PROFESSION

The federal government has a major role to play in developing the museum profession at all levels, and in supporting the museum community in its efforts to upgrade its abilities to provide high quality service to the Canadian public.

In its role as enabler, the federal government must support the training programmes of the national and provincial museum associations as well as internship programmes such as that offered by the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

Support for training programmes operated by provincial museum associations is a matter for negotiation between the two levels of government as part of federal/provincial co-operative strategies for museum development.

As a programme agency, the federal government should consult with the provinces and the museum community regarding the need for federally-established and operated institutes for museum training at the post-secondary level. Existing training services, such as those of the Canadian Conservation Institute, should continue to be available to the museum community.

Development of recognized standards for museums is a complementary activity to training and Manitoba applauds the federal government's support of the Canadian Museums Association's feasibility study on museum standards. Manitoba is co-operating closely with the Association of Manitoba Museums in a similar effort at the provincial level to develop a long-term integrated plan for museum training and standards.

6.0 FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Manitoba affirms the need for a federal commitment to Canadian museums. In support of this commitment, the activities of the federal government should respect the priorities of provincial governments and complement provincial policies. Manitoba supports the concept of bilateral agreements for long-term heritage development based on strategies compatible with provincial objectives. Because different provinces have made different commitments to heritage and have produced different heritage development strategies, federal government programmes should be capable of flexibility in complementing provincial strategies. Federal/provincial agreements should take into consideration the standards to be achieved, agreement on the level at which an activity within a province exists, and respective responsibilities and accountabilities and the provision of equitable levels of support. Provincial priorities must be respected in the development of new programmes or the phasing out of current federal programmes.

Finally, there is a need for further discussion, to include the broader issue of federal management of all its heritage activities, with consideration for federal/provincial umbrella heritage agreements and a comprehensive federal heritage policy to guide activities at the national level.

7.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The federal government, through The National Museums of Canada Corporation, has contributed to growth in professionalism and sophistication of the Canadian museum community. The Province of Manitoba has a proven commitment to museum development and to federal-provincial co-operation. Manitoba recognizes that there is a shared federal/provincial responsibility for museum development and encourages an expanded federal role in this area.

APPENDIX A: RESPONSE TO THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Five Principles

Manitoba supports the Interprovincial Heritage Advisory Council (IPHAC) view that there is a need for a clear, concise federal mission statement which provides for an ongoing commitment to Canadian museums. Manitoba's primary concern vis-a-vis federal/provincial financial responsibilities relates to federal support of Associate Museums and National Exhibition Centres. We note that federal core-funding assistance in the last six years to the two Associate Museums in Manitoba (the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature and the Winnipeg Art Gallery) and the Leaf Rapids National Exhibition Centre has not kept pace with inflation and that assistance received under the Museum Assistance Programmes for the same period has dropped by 50%. The federal government needs not only to reaffirm its commitment to federally-established institutions (such as the four National Museums and the National Exhibition Centres), but also to institutions with which it has established a special relationship - the Associates - as well as the Canadian museum community as a whole.

Recommendation One

Manitoba endorses IPHAC's position that there must be reference to an accountability mechanism to ensure that the four Nationals are responsible for the provision of services nation-wide, exclusive of financial assistance programmes. This commitment of services must be developed in consultation with the museum community. The Winnipeg Art Gallery, for instance, seeks improved access to the resources (collections, library and information) of the National Gallery and wants the present moratorium on loans lifted. The Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature would like to see additional services provided, such as federally-established institutes for museum professional development and training, and regional offices of the National Museums which could provide access to expertise in planning, marketing, programming and other areas where the threshold of resources is not possible at the level of a single institution.

Recommendation Two

Manitoba accepts the need for an interim devolution of authority, etc. to the directors of the National Museums, provided the distinction is made between operations management, the normal responsibility of directors, and policy management, the responsibility of boards. Manitoba would encourage the establishment of responsible Boards of Directors consisting of knowledgeable people with regional as well as national perspectives, and that the Boards have a clear understanding of their roles as well as the expectations (and non-expectations) of the national and regional museum communities.

Recommendation Three

Manitoba supports the need to restructure the federal assistance programmes for museums. The programmes must be adequately financed regardless of whether or not there are savings in other areas. There is a need for an increased federal share in support and development of museums. At a time when

federal support to Manitoba's museums was declining (1979-85), provincial support increased by 250%. Manitoba encourages a greater level of federal participation in major heritage institutions throughout Canada.

Phasing out of existing federal commitments is a matter for negotiation between Ottawa and the provinces as part of federal/provincial co-operative agreements.

Recommendation Four

Manitoba endorses IPHAC's position and that of the Canadian Museums Association that there is a need to re-develop and re-sanction grant criteria. The Manitoba Arts Council and Manitoba Intercultural Council in particular have expressed concerns about the complexity of the grants process and the limited federal recognition of the legitimacy of a multicultural component in Canadian museums. Manitoba's museum and cultural community have strongly endorsed an arm's-length relationship with the federal government in assistance programmes.

There is a need for federal/provincial agreements leading to enhancement of provincial heritage strategies. Agreements should be long-term and deal with the provinces directly. There is room for third party arrangements for specific purposes, for example between the federal government and Associate museums or provincial museum associations, provided that such arrangements have been integrated into bilateral agreements between the provincial and federal governments.

A definition of "equalization" is needed. A formula for equalization should take into consideration the standards to be achieved, agreement on the level at which an activity within a province exists, and respective responsibilities and accountabilities and the provision of equitable levels of support.

Recommendation Five

In addition to a programme to support travelling exhibits and the mobility of knowledge and expertise, there is a need for a commitment from the four federal museums to provide travelling exhibits for Canadian museums and galleries. Coupled with this is the issue of adequate funding of the four federal museums to deliver programs, dependent on the programs desired by the museum community.

Recommendation Six

Manitoba agrees with IPHAC that a programme of federal assistance should include development of the museum profession at all levels, and further suggests that the federal government investigate the feasibility of federally-established and operated institutes for museum training at the post-secondary level. There is a need for continued federal support of provincial museum association training plans and internship porgrammes such as the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature's Museum Technician Training Programme.

Recommendation Seven (a)

There is an ongoing need for a federal role in conservation. Sophisticated treatments, research, training, information and advisory services are needed at a level which cannot be effective at present if devolved to the provinces. Stronger provincial roles may develop in the future as part of federal/provincial co-operative strategies, but Manitoba sees a continuing need for federal conservation services.

In addition, Manitoba suggests that the federal government consider a funding programme to assist Canadian institutions in having conservation work done elsewhere if the federal conservation service is unable to complete the work because of constraints of time or expertise.

Recommendation Seven (b)

Manitoba supports the retention of a national computerized collections inventory system. A network capability for research and for national and international exchange of information is essential and the critical mass to achieve this resides appropriately at the federal level.

Recommendation Seven (c) and (d)

Manitoba agrees that the Mobile Exhibits and International Programmes can be ended. In these instances, the more appropriate federal role is one of enabler, rather than a programming agency, in order to make available to Canadian museums the resources to develop their own capabilities in these areas.

Recommendation Seven (e)

There is a need for an enhanced federal share in supporting and developing Canadian museums. The federal government has a primary responsibility for adequately supporting its four National Museums (each of which has a mandate to serve the country) and is also responsible for adequately assisting museums throughout Canada. This responsibility is independent of any decision-related specific sources of federal funds.

The issue of funding for the federal museums should take into account recommendations of the Bovey and Neilsen reports. Manitoba would support the federal museums seeking alternate revenue sources provided that this activity did not disrupt the museum community's fundraising ecology.

Recommendation Seven (f)

Manitoba agrees with IPHAC in questioning the number of new projects which could be supported under the present level of federal funding allocated to the Cultural Initiatives Programme.

Recommendation Seven (g)

There is a need for a more specific definition of "common services". The current level of services available through the Department of Communications and Museum Assistance Programmes must be maintained, as well as services supported indirectly by the federal government such as those of the national and provincial associations.

Manitoba suggests that the federal government investigate the feasibility of establishing regional offices to provide consultation, information and advice to Canadian museums on subjects such as marketing, planning, public programming, and other areas where the threshold of resources is not available to any one institution to maintain this expertise. An appropriate model is the agricultural extension agent, who acts as a "window" on contemporary research and technology. This would reduce the need for consultants' grants and provide for continuity and a federal leadership role.

Recommendation Eight (a)

Manitoba agrees with IPHAC that, in principle, the federal government may decide where it is most appropriate to administer its programmes. There is a strong concern on the part of Manitoba's museum and cultural community at the effect of a non-arm's-length relationship with the federal government. There is also a feeling that a community context is crucial, and that any granting process must consider some element of community as well as peer assessment. Provincial priorities must be respected in the development of new programmes. There is a need for further consultations on this issue, to include the broader issue of federal management of all its heritage activities, with consideration for federal/provincial umbrella heritage agreements and a comprehensive federal heritage policy to guide activities at the national level.

Recommendation Eight (b)

Manitoba agrees that present commitments under the current Museum Assistance Programmes be respected, and that, subject to this, the current programmes should phase out when and where the new programmes phase in.